

PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION

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Only significant errors of English in the translation have been corrected—the content will be checked against the original Japanese for accuracy at a later date.

The History of the Great Thanksgiving Ceremony

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The Daijōsai, or “Great Thanksgiving Ceremony,” originated as a ritual of rice farming, which is the root of Japanese culture, and the Daijōsai is part of the imperial enthronement ritual, which is the core of the structure of the state. Because of that, it is found that while sustaining the essential features of the ritual, the Daijōsai has changed in terms of the way it has been conducted. The history of the Daijōsai can be explained by dividing it into six stages.

First, the first stage signifies the period before the Daijōsai was established as a system. During this period, Niinamesai, which became the matrix of the Daijōsai, was practiced, and from the Yayoi period to the reign of Emperor Tenchi. The second stage is the time of establishment and development. In terms of periodization, it is from the end of the Asuka period to the middle of the Heian period, and from the 40th emperor Tenmu to the 60th emperor Daigo. The third stage is the period of transformation from the middle of the Heian period to the middle of the Muromachi period (around the time of Ōnin War). It is from the 61st emperor Suzaku to the 103rd emperor Go-Tsuchimikado. The fourth stage is the period of interrupt from the middle of the Muromachi period (the Warring States period). It is the period from the 104th emperor Go-Kashiwabara to the 112th emperor Reigen. The fifth stage marks the period of restoration. It is from the middle to the end of the Edo period, and from the 113th emperor Higashiyama to the 121st emperor Kōmei. The sixth stage is the period of development from the Meiji to Shōwa periods, and from the 124th emperor Shōwa.

The First Stage: The Period of the Beginning of the Daijōsai

Rice farming, which had been brought into Japan at the end of Jōmon period, rapidly spread throughout the country, which largely changed the social structure up to that point and shifted from a hunter-gatherer economy to production economy. Due to high efficiency and long-term storage of rice, rice farming made it possible to sustain many people, and the activities of production inevitably formed a community. It is sense of values and habits, which had been produced through the activities of the community of rice farming, that have been the root of Japanese culture.

Festivals relating to rice is one of such. The ancient people of Japan called the country “mizuho no kuni, or the land of rice” which contains their condensed hope for a good harvest. From this hope, a series of festivals were produced. Above all, Niinamesai is an important festival, which has been thought that through offering the rice newly harvested in fall to kami and ancestors and

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consuming together with them, they hoped to revitalization of life. And this festival has been thought to be conducted in agricultural society in general.

This Niinamesai has been, needless to say, conducted by an emperor. However, in the case of the emperor's Niinamesai, it has been thought to have particular meaning. It is the Niinamesai of the regality.

The emperor's Niinamesai originates in the mythology that Amaterasu Ōmikami bestowed ears of rice harvested in heaven on Ninigi no mikoto upon his descent to earth. Rice offered by the emperor for Niinamesai is produced in the special rice field belonging to the emperor, and this rice field is the reemergence of the very sacred rice field of heaven. In terms of a way of thinking of mythology, the order on earth reflects the order of Kami centering on Amaterasu Ōmikami in heaven. Therefore, it can be thought that Niinamesai, which has been conducted by princes and ministers of the imperial court centering on the emperor, functions as a festival to verify the mission and world view that they bring the order of Kami on earth while inheriting the ancestors' acts. There is no wonder why Niinamesai with such values later developed as the Daijōsai as the ritual of enthronement.

The Second Stage: The Establishment and Development of the Daijōsai

The establishment of the Daijōsai as a ritual of enthronement specific to Japan is deeply related with the foundation of the ancient Japanese nation under the ritsuryō codes starting with Taika Reform. In those days, the governing principle of the ancient nation largely changed, and the position of people shifted from that of being privately controlled by powerful clans to that of "citizens" who were publicly governed by the nation. The powerful clans also became "public servants" who were integrated into the organization of the nation. At the same time, the consciousness of independence toward the outside of the nation built up.

This circumstance clearly reflected the enthronement rituals. Niinamesai, which had been fostered by a new governing principle and the consciousness of independence toward the outside of the nation, became the Daijōsai. In the case of the Daijōsai, unlike Niinamesai, service for citizens, such as regions of Yuki and Suki provinces, was regarded as a highly important element. Also, the Daijōsai was formed as an independent ritual different from the Chinese one for enthronement.

The establishment of the Daijōsai is said to have happened during the reign of the 40th emperor Tenmu (r. 673-86), or the 41st empress Jitō (r. 686-97). The Daijōsai, which had been established like this, developed along with the efflorescence of the nation with ritsuryō codes, and from the end of the Nara period to the beginning of the Heian period, its importance as the ritual of imperial enthronement increased. This period is marked by the reevaluation of the politics valuing Buddhism and the adoration of worship of Kami. At the Daijōsai of the 50th emperor Kanmu (r. 781-806), offering of the imperial regalia by the Imbe clan was moved from the ritual of coronation to the Daijōsai. (Note that this particular ritual terminated after the 54th emperor Ninmei's the Daijōsai.) At the Daijōsai of the 51st emperor Heijyō (r. 806-809), the banquet was set up for three days of Tatsu, Mi, and Toyoakari-sechie, and the emperor's purification ceremony outside the palace was conducted for the first time. Also, the period of staying clear was fixed as a month. Like this, the process of making ceremonies of the Daijōsai magnificent reached its high point during the reign of Emperor Heijyō.

The magnificence of the Daijōsai was also legally founded and regulated in the Kōnin Shiki Code, Jōgan Shiki Code, and Engi Shiki Code. The Kōnin Shiki Code was founded during the 52nd emperor Saga (r. 809-823) and enforced during the 53rd emperor Junwa (r. 823-33). The Jōgan

Shiki Code was founded by the imperial edict of the 56th emperor Seiwa. The Engi Shiki Code was completed during the reign of the 60th emperor Daigo and was enforced during the reign of the 63rd emperor Reizei.

The Third Stage: Transformation of the Daijōsai

The period of the reigns of the 60th emperor Daigo and the 62nd emperor Murakami (r. 946-67) is admired as *Engi-Tenryaku no Chi*, or the magnificent imperial reign by people of later period. However, since this time, in reality, the principle of land publically owned, which was the base of the ritsuryō system, began to greatly change. By the expansion of the private land, it became difficult to maintain the rice field allotment system; thus, the imperial court tried to protect the financial resource by having rice fields managed directly. Also, by strengthening the authority of *kokushi*, or provincial governor, the imperial court came to entrust the regional politics to *kokushi*. And at the imperial court, after Emperor Murakami, sesshō or kanpaku were founded. This means that the governing power of the central government began decline.

This kind of transformation of a state system is called the shift from the ritsuryō system to the system of the dynasty state. This change is projected on the Daijōsai. First, since Emperor Daigo's the Daijōsai, provinces for Yuki and Suki were fixed: the former was Ōmi and the latter was Harima, Tanba, and Bicchū no kuni, and only gun or smaller division of a province was selected by divination. (Except the cases of lack of the Daijōsai after the 67th emperor Sanjō, it was fixed that Ōmi was Yuki and Suki was Tanba, which continued until the 121st emperor Kōmei.) Moreover, at the time of the 73rd emperor Go-Sanjō (r. 1068-1072), due to the tax system based on the ritsuryō system, it became difficult to conduct the Daijōsai, and the "daijōeyaku" or a temporary tax for *shōen* or private estates and *kōryō* or public lands was founded for the Daijōsai.

The enforcement of this "daijōeyaku" was entrusted to a regional governor, but when it turned the Kamakura period and after the 84th emperor Juntoku (r.1210-1221)'s the Daijōsai, regardless of *shōen* or *kōryō*, lords of all lands of the country had to pay tax. Around the time of the 92nd emperor Fushimi (r.1287-1298)'s the Daijōsai, there was a tendency that the bakufu began to collect necessary expenditure, and for the 95th emperor Hanazono (r.1308-1318)'s the Daijōsai, the bakufu mainly collected the necessary expenditure.

During that period, the 85th emperor Chūkyō (r.1221) was not able to conduct the Daijōsai due to the effect of Jōkyū uprising. Similarly, after the failure of Kenm no chūkō or Kenmu Restoration of the 96th emperor Go-Daigo (r.1318-1339), the three emperors of the Southern Court of Yoshino, the 97th Go-Murakami (r.1339-1368), the 98th Chōkei (r.1368-1383), and the 99th Go-Kameyama (r.1383-1392), did not conduct the Daijōsai.

After the unification of the Northern and Southern Courts, the Daijōsai from the 100th emperor Go-Komatsu (r.1392-1412) to the 103rd emperor Go-tsuchimikado (r.1464-1500) was conducted by the support of the Muromachi bakufu.

The Fourth Stage: The Interruption of the Daijōsai

After the outbreak of the Ōnin War in 1467, the Warring States period began, and the Daijōsai was interrupted from the 104th emperor Go-Kashiwabara (r.1500-26) to the 112nd emperor Reigen (r.1663-87) for nine generations or 221 years. Even during this difficult period, emperors always hoped that the Daijōsai should be restored. The 105th emperor Go-Nara (r.1526-57) sent an envoy to Ise Jingū in order to offer his prayer for restoration of the Daijōsai. The 108th emperor Gomizunoo (r.1611-29) wrote *Touji nenjuu gyōji*, and similarly, many emperors did research on court

rituals and wrote about them.

The Fifth Stage: The Restoration of the Daijōsai

Emperor Gomizunoo's son the 112th emperor Reigen inherited his father's will and made efforts to restore the Daijōsai. Although the Tokugawa bakufu was not supportive for Reigen's efforts at all at the beginning, as a result of negotiating for six months, the agreement was made between the bakufu and imperial court that the budget of the enthronement ceremony would be used for the expense of the Daijōsai in order not to increase the expense of the bakufu. Thus, on the fourth of April of the 4th year of the Jōkyō period, Emperor Reigen abducted his crown to his son the 113th emperor Higashiyama (r.1687-1709), and on the 16th of November of the same year, the Daijōsai was restored. Yet many aspects of the Daijōsai were simplified such as the termination of the purification ceremony and the fixing of *sechie* or banquet for the day of *tatsu* only.

At the time of the 114th emperor Nakamikado (r.1709-1735), the Daijōsai was again interrupted, but at the time of the 115th emperor Sakuramachi (r.1735-1747), the bakufu offered the support for the conduct of the Daijōsai by the will of Shōgun Yoshimune. As a result, the Daijōsai supported by the bakufu continued until the 121st emperor Kōmei.

The Sixth Stage: Redevelopment

Meiji Restoration, which had taken place by getting through turmoil at the end of the Edo bakufu since Commodore Perry's arrival in Japan, broke up the system under the Shogunate and aimed to establish the modern centralized nation while sustaining tradition. This is clearly shown by the enthronement ceremony of Emperor Meiji, the 122nd (r.1867-1912), which took place on the 27th of August of the 4th year of the Keiō period. At this enthronement ceremony, which happened at the imperial palace in Kyoto, it was decided that meritorious retainers should be equally treated by taking a lesson from the failure of Kenmu Restoration, and officials of the new government (mainly from the warrior class) besides conventional officials (nobles) served. Also, instead of the Chinese way of enthronement ceremony, the Japanese way was newly introduced.

After the series of changes such as the transfer of the capital from Kyoto to Tokyo (March of Meiji 2), returning feudal domains to the imperial court (June of Meiji 2), and abolition of feudal domains and establishment of prefectures (July of Meiji 4), Emperor Meiji's the Daijōsai was conducted on the 17th of November of the 4th year of the Meiji period. This the Daijōsai was conducted in Tokyo, which discontinued a tradition that the Daijōsai had been conducted in Kyoto since *Heian sento*. Along with this change, the provinces for *yuki* and *suki* was decided by deviation based on Tokyo as center, and Kai province (Yamanashi prefecture) was chosen for *yuki* and Awa province (Chiba prefecture) for *suki*. Thus, the fixation of *yuki* and *suki* since Emperor Daigo ended. Also, special products of both provinces of *yuki* and *suki* were decided to be offered as a new ceremony (*niwazumi no tsukue no shiromono*), and a way of the people's support was extended.

Along with the development of the Meiji nation, the legal system relating to the Imperial Household began to be put in order, and *Kōshitsutenpan* or the Imperial Household Law was enacted in the year of 22 of the Meiji period. By this Imperial Household Law, it was enacted that both the enthronement ceremony and the Daijōsai should be conducted in Kyoto. Following, in the year of 42 of the Meiji period, *Tōkyoku-rei*, which regulated the ceremony for the accession to the Throne, was promulgated. After that, the Daijōsai of the 123rd emperor Taishō (r.1912-1926) and the 124th emperor Shōwa (r.1926-1989) were conducted according to the regulations of *Tōkyoku-rei*.

The Program for The Daijōsai

The Daijōsai itself is a festival held in November, but in fact, a series of ceremonies of the Daijōsai begin with the ceremony of selecting the sacred rice field. This ceremony is for selecting the sacred rice field where rice to be used at the Daijōsai will be produced, and it is a traditional event that chooses “yuki den” or the sacred rice field for *yuki* and “suki den” or the sacred rice field for *suki* by deviation based on patterns of cracks of burnt shell of tortoise, called *kiboku*, which has been practiced since the ancient times. From old days, the sacred rice fields for both *yuki* and *suki* had been chosen centered around Kyoto, and based on it, the article 8 of *Tōkyoku-rei* regulated that “regarding the sacred rice fields for the Daijōsai, eastern and southern area from Kyoto should be the yuki region and western and northern area from Kyoto should be the suki region, and the sacred rice fields should be decided accordingly.” Additionally, yuki and suki signify cleanness after being ritualized and purified. In the case of the Daijōsai of Heisei, it was decided that “yuki den” would be chosen in the Akita prefecture, and “suki den” would be chosen in the Oita prefecture.

When it turns September and at the time of rice harvest, a ceremony of harvest takes place in the yuki den and suki den. This is called “nukiho no gi” or a ceremony of plucking the ears of rice plants. For this ceremony, customarily, the imperial envoy is sent by the emperor. From the harvested sacred rice, special sacred sake called *shiroki kuroki* is brewed at the brewery located in the Kamowakeikazuchi Shrine (Kamigamo) by using water from the well of the shrine. Other sacred food to be offered to kami are also prepared.

The first large ceremony of a series of enthronement ceremonies is the accession one held on the 12th of November. During the morning of this day, “sokuirei tōjitsu kensho oomae no gi” is held at the Kensho, or one of the three imperial palace shrine where the sacred mirror where the spirit of Amaterasu Ōmikami is believed to reside. This is a ceremony which the emperor reports to Amaterasu Ōmikami that the accession ceremony is to be held on that day, and after reverentially offering a branch of the sacred tree, the emperor recites the Shinto prayer called *otsugebumi* to his ancestral spirits. In the afternoon of this day, “sokuirei tōjitsu shōden no gi” is held. In the hall named *matsu no ma* of the Imperial Palace, two Imperial Thrones are placed for this ceremony, brought from the Kyoto Imperial Palace: *takamikura* and *michoudai*. The structure of former consists of three levels of covered black stairs with a black lacquer palace and ornamentations of a big phoenix, a small phoenix, and a mirror; the latter is smaller and less decorated than the former. The Emperor sits in the former; the Empress sits in the latter. At this ceremony, customarily, the Emperor makes his statement, and the prime minister as a representative of the nation, recites “yogoto” or the words of celebration.

After that, it is the Daijōsai that is held on the 23rd of November. A series of related ceremonies to the Daijōsai held for Emperor Shōwa are as follows: At first, a shrine called daijōkyū is newly built where the Daijōsai is held. This daijōkyū consists of yuki-den of east, suki-den of west, kairyū-den, and other buildings. A structure of each building is simple consisting of straws for roofs and logs without removing the surface. For this coming the Daijōsai [of Heisei], daijōkyū will be founded in the east side of the Imperial Palace.

The very ceremony held on the day of the Daijōsai is called “daijōkyū no gi.” This *daijōkyū no gi* comprises two ceremonies “yuki-den no gi” and “suki-den no gi.” It is “yuki-den kusen no gi” or offering sacred food to kami. The Emperor who was wearing *sokutai* attire of silk and pure white without design moves onto the hall in the middle of the kairyū-den and takes a bath with hot water for purification. Next, the Emperor changes his attire to *gosai fuku* or the ritual costume. During the time of his changing the attire, those who are to attend *daijōkyū no gi* proceed to the open-air building set up for them to observe the ceremony take their seats.

At the time of the Emperor's arrival from kairyū-den to yuki-den, a reginal song of kuzu no kofū or a song of an ancient style from kuzu and another reginal song of yuki province are performed. Kuzu no kofū originates in the story that when Emperor Oujin visited Yamato Yoshino region, villagers of kuzu offered rice wine and sang a song, and it is the song that since that time, villagers of kuzu came to attend the banquet at the Imperial Palace and sang. A reginal song from yuki province signifies a song which is newly composed including the famous place names.

Next, those who make procession to carry the sacred foods for the Daijōsai (shinsen gyōryū) get ready and enter the yuki-den. At this time, the Emperor proceeds to the imperial seat located in the inner sanctum of the yuki-den from its outer area. After he purifies his hands, "shinsen goshinku no gi" takes place. While being assisted by maidens, the Emperor himself offers the sacred foods to kami. After that, *naorai* happens. Here, the Emperor ritually has some of the sacred food offered to kami. Then the rest of the sacred foods take away, and the Emperor goes back to the kairyū-den. During these times, the court musicians perform kagura songs.

Next, similarly, the sacred foods are offered to kami at the suki-den in the same manner as the *yuki-den no gi*. After *daijōkyū no gi* of yuki-den and suki-den, "taikyō" or banquet is held. This can be thought as *naorai* after a festival. In the ancient times, this was held three times, but in the case of Emperor Shōwa, it was held at the newly built hall twice: banquet of the first day held on the day of the Daijōsai and banquet of the second day held on the next of the Daijōsai. At the hall for the banquet, seats for the Emperor and the Empress were set up in the center of the northern part of the hall, and a folding screen with a picture depicting the yuki province and another folding screen with a picture depicting the suki province were also placed at the banquet hall. On these screens, selected poems were written. During this ceremony, gagaku was performed, and fuzoku-mai or ritualized dance of province of yuki province and suki province were performed. On the day of the Daijōsai, government officials were also invited to a grand party held in the evening. Also, on the first day of the Daijōsai, a banquet came to be held in regions in Japan; thus, a banquet was held in each region. In the case of Emperor Shōwa, more than 220,000 people attended such a banquet in Japan.

In this way, after a series of rituals relating to the enthronement ceremony were completed, the Emperor and the Empress undertook their visits to Ise Jingū, Emperor Jinmu's ridge, and the imperial tombs of the former four emperors: Kōmei, Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa. In the case of this coming the Daijōsai of Heisei, a tea party is to be held in Kyoto.